

"LOVE GOD" MADE MEN FOLLOWERS TAKE VOWS OF CELIBACY, SAYS WOMAN OF TEMPLE

BY IDAH M'GLONE GIBSON

Benton Harbor, Mich., Dec. 19.—A queer angle in human nature—one that will show the difference between feminine and masculine human nature—will probably be brought out with the federal investigation of Benjamin, the self-styled "seventh angel of the elect," and his alleged immoral practices with the women inmates of his "Israelite House of David," or "Flying Roller colony."

The arrest of Benjamin is imminent. Both the state and federal authorities want him.

I have just had an interview with Mrs. Edith Clarke, one of the three women whose affidavits accuse Benjamin of immoral practices.

She came here with her husband and five children from Australia some years ago.

"How did you come to hear of this religious (?) movement?" I asked.

"Benjamin himself was over there and my husband and I had already been believing that the last days spoken of in the bible had come.

"Benjamin only added a little more detail to our belief. He told us that he was gathering together the one hundred and forty-four thousand who were to live in THE FLESH after the world was destroyed."

"Was it the idea that you were going to live forever that made you follow Benjamin from the antipodes?"

Mrs. Clarke's face underwent a change. She bent forward confidentially. "No; that was not it. It was the fact that Benjamin preached absolute celibacy. I had borne seven children, and the thought of the companionship of my husband without the fear of the hardship of motherhood was very pleasant to me.

"We came, and for seven years my husband and I lived apart, and I am quite sure that the men in the 'House of David' live up to the tenets of its

teaching of celibacy.

"Benjamin is the only man who knows what is going on in the inner house and teaches the women that, as he is pure, he will purify them if they submit to his wishes.

"I shall never forget the first time," she said, "that I found out these things. I could not believe my eyes. However, I soon found that terrible practices were a part of the life, and, knowing that my own little girl would soon be becoming a woman, I felt I could not stand to see her fall into Benjamin's clutches, and so I got out with my husband and children. My husband knew nothing of this until I left.

"My life is ruined and I am perfectly willing to swear to every thing I have told you. I will also be glad to tell my story at any court of law.

"That place must be broken up."
"The House of David" is in a turmoil just at present, as its head is alleged to be out of town.

Benjamin Purnell, its founder, is alleged to have been one of the people in the ranks of the notorious "Prince Michael," was sentenced to prison in Detroit a few years ago for a statutory offense. The tenets of the "Flying Rollers" are much the same as those taught by "Prince."

Benjamin calls himself the Seventh Angel. And for one who believes that the end of the world is so very near he has taken uncommon interest in gathering together about a half a million dollars, besides the 800 people he says belong to his elect of 144,000.

In the last few years there have been about sixty couples married in batches of twenty at different times. This was done, the women allege, by Benjamin to protect himself.

The wholesale marriages have been performed by the justices of peace and one minister in Benton Harbor.